

## **INDIANA RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (IRDC) 2003 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **Goal #1. Rural Economic Development Strategy (REDS):**

#### ***Expand awareness of the issues and recommendations developed in the REDS Report***

- a) IRDC Governing Board members met with state/local elected officials regarding the recommendations identified in REDS. As a result of the REDS work, both the Governor's office and the Indiana General Assembly joined together and approved legislation creating two new funding sources (totaling \$3.6 million per year) for IRDC to administer on behalf of Indiana rural communities.
- b) The Governing Board and Executive Director began to discuss, with elected officials and partner groups, the legislative intent pertaining to the two new funding sources Rural Development Council Fund and the Rural Development Administration Fund. As a result of these meetings the IRDC Governing Board began to re-assess its organizational values, and operating procedures. These actions will provide the basis for the creation of the grant guidelines for the two new funding sources.

#### ***Ensure the recommendations in the REDS Report exist throughout IRDC's Workplan***

- a) The various task forces and working groups met to assess their current project status and initiate planning for 2004. As a result, the task forces began to formulate 2004 plans merging uncompleted elements of 2003 into 2004. In addition committees had an opportunity to work with 2004 projects utilizing the outcome-based methodologies required by National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP).

### **Goal #2. Agricultural Development:**

#### ***Continue dialogue with funding providers on agricultural and agri-business needs***

- a) Governing Board members and the Executive Director engaged in discussions with various partner groups (e.g. Office of Commissioner of Agriculture, Purdue University, USDA-Rural Development) regarding the interest in shared-use community kitchens and developing a strategic approach to support community kitchens through the creation of a local, regional, and state-wide resource support system. A number of rural communities are now researching this agri-business potential for their rural area. For example, the Madison Chamber of Commerce is partnering with the Small Business Development Corporation, agricultural producers and others to launch a community kitchen incubator at its business center.
- b) The IRDC received notification from the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture (OCA) that a previously awarded project grant (whose funding had been temporarily frozen due to the state economy) had been re-initiated. This project will focus on assisting tobacco-based communities in southern Indiana. As a result tobacco communities will receive a variety of financial and technical assistance services from IRDC and its partner groups.
- c) The IRDC along with several of our Indiana partners collaborated with the states of Kentucky and Tennessee, and the Council of State Governments to implement a multi-state rural development conference. Efforts are underway to enhance/strengthen rural development approaches utilizing multi-state methodologies.

***Assist start-up and existing agri-business cooperatives in Indiana***

- a) IRDC, in partnership with the OCA and Purdue University, submitted a project grant entitled Rural Cooperative Development Center to USDA-Rural Development (USDA-RD). As a result of the collaborative effort, USDA-RD awarded IRDC, Inc. a one year grant of \$175,000. With matching resources from other partner groups, over \$660,000 has been identified to assist new/existing rural cooperative initiatives.

**Goal #3. Outreach Development:**

***Increase awareness of the IRDC***

- a) The Executive Director initiated a variety of actions which were designed to inform partner groups about the recent activities of IRDC. Activities included written communications, community visits and organizational presentations. As a result, many partner groups and rural organizations became re-connected to IRDC. The Council's new board orientation program helped directors better understand the scope of the organization's mission and programs.

***Showcase accomplishments of the IRDC, its partners and thriving communities throughout the state***

- a) The 2003 annual meeting celebrated IRDC's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The day-long educational event brought together a record number of attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, and presenters. The event was an educational, financial, and organizational networking success. Indiana's new Lt. Governor had an opportunity to meet many leaders from the state's rural communities. The energy created by the celebration sparked new interest in broadening the event to invite other rural development organizations to participate in a joint annual meeting. In addition, the celebration brought both new funding and program partners to IRDC.

**Goal #4. Community Visitation Program:**

***Monitor the successes and obstacles of the Community Visitation Program***

- a) IRDC met with the Center for Economic and Community Development at Ball State University and Indiana Rural Community Assistance Program to strengthen and enhance IRDC's Community Visitation Program. The three organizations have agreed to collaborate in order to deliver their own similar programs in a coordinated and more effective delivery system.

**Goal #5. Environmental Infrastructure Working Group (EIWG):**

***Evaluate the usefulness and effectiveness of the EIWG program***

- a) An EIWG meeting was conducted with the various partner groups in order to prepare for the 2004 program. EIWG task force members agreed to perform an evaluation of the program from both a partner perspective as well as a customer service basis. They also agreed to try to conduct more of the 2004 EIWG sessions in different parts of rural Indiana.

**Goal #6. Leadership Development:**

***Use the networks and resources of the IRDC to showcase leadership success stories from throughout Indiana***

- a) IRDC received an organizational Leadership Award from the Indiana Leadership Association. This special recognition occurred during their annual statewide conference.

As a result of this recognition, IRDC's work in the area of leadership development was highlighted throughout the state. In addition, a closer understanding and bond has occurred which will translate into a variety of program opportunities for rural communities such as a joint leadership directory and an enhanced leadership training curriculum.

## **Goal #7. Administrative Activities:**

### ***Maintain administrative organization of the IRDC***

- a) Don Koverman was hired as a result of the Executive Committee search for new executive director.
- b) The Governing Board received State Rural Development Council (SRDC) federal certification to the NRDP office. As a result, IRDC has begun to re-assess its 2003 Work Plan, as well as initiate the physical move of the organization over to the Indiana Department of Commerce (IDOC).
- c) IRDC board members and Executive Director attended the NRDP meeting in Washington D.C. and learned about the implications/ expectations for the SRDCs relative to the 2002 Farm Bill.

### ***Ensure the long-term viability of the Council***

- a) The Governing Board examined its historical "host" relationship with the Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture and the potential of an enhanced relationship with the IDOC. As a result of this review, IRDC created a new memorandum of understanding with the IDOC. As part of the new agreement, the IRDC will receive a new program manager position funded by non-federal resources.